

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An image reading apparatus, comprising:

a reading transparent member;

a reading unit that reads through said reading transparent member an image on an original document that is being conveyed over an original document reading position of said reading transparent member; and

a spacer that is mounted on said reading transparent member on a surface thereof opposite the side thereof at which said reading unit is disposed and at a position upstream from the original document reading position relative to an original document conveyance direction,

wherein the spacer is configured such that height of a downstream end thereof relative to the original document conveyance direction decreases in a sloping manner toward the downstream direction,

the spacer [[is]] comprising a topmost edge configured to cause a first portion of the original document to be out of contact with the reading transparent member at a location over the original document reading position and a second portion of the original document to come in contact with the reading transparent member at a location downstream from the original document reading position relative to the original document conveyance direction as the first portion of the original document is conveyed over the original document reading position, and the spacer comprising a sloping surface configured such that a trailing edge portion of the original document passes a position very close to or in contact with [[a]] the sloping surface of the spacer, and

a distance between the reading transparent member and the first portion of the original document is less than 0.3 mm at the location over the original document reading position.

2-3. (Canceled).

4. (Currently Amended) An image reading apparatus, comprising:

a reading transparent member;

a reading unit that reads through said reading transparent member an image on an original document that is being conveyed over an original document reading position of said reading transparent member; and

a spacer that is mounted on said reading transparent member on a surface thereof opposite the side thereof at which said reading unit is disposed and at a position upstream from the original document reading position relative to an original document conveyance direction, wherein

said spacer comprises a lower surface member that comes into contact with said reading transparent member and an upper surface member that comes into contact with the original document during conveyance of the original document wherein such members are glued together to form a step configuration where the height of the steps decrease toward a downstream direction, and said upper surface member is made of a material having both a lower friction coefficient and superior wear-resistance than a material of said lower surface member,

a topmost edge of the upper surface member of the spacer ~~[[is]]~~ being configured to cause a first portion of the original document to be out of contact with the reading transparent member at a location over the original document reading position and a second portion of the original document to come in contact with the reading transparent member at a location downstream from the original document reading position relative to the original document conveyance direction as the first portion of the original document is conveyed over the original document reading position, and the lower surface member of the spacer being configured such that a trailing edge portion of the original document passes a position very close to or in contact with a ~~sloping surface~~ distal end of the lower surface member of the spacer, and

a distance between the reading transparent member and the first portion of the original document is less than 0.3 mm at the location over the original document reading position.

5. (Previously Presented) The image reading apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein thickness of said upper surface member is 0.4 mm, while thickness of said lower surface member is 0.25 mm.

6. (Previously Presented) The image reading apparatus according to Claim 5, wherein a downstream end of said lower surface member relative to the original document conveyance direction protrudes from beyond that of said upper surface member by 1 mm in the downstream direction.

7. (Previously Presented) The image reading apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein said reading position is placed at a position 3 mm from the downstream end of said lower surface member toward the downstream direction.

8. (Previously Presented) The image reading apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein the interval between said reading transparent member and an original document conveyance path is 0.2 mm at said original document reading position.

9. (Original) The image reading apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein said upper surface member is formed by a film made of high-polymer polyethylene, while said lower surface member is formed by a film made of polyester.

10. (Original) The image reading apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein said upper surface member is formed by a film made of fluorine resin, while said lower surface member is formed by a film made of polyester.

11. (Currently Amended) A spacer to be used for an image reading apparatus which has a reading transparent member and a reading unit that reads through said reading transparent member an image of an original document that is being conveyed over an original document reading position of said reading transparent member,

wherein said spacer is mounted on said reading transparent member on a surface thereof opposite the side thereof at which said reading unit is disposed and at a position upstream from the original document reading position relative to an original document conveyance direction,

said spacer is configured such that height of a downstream end thereof relative to the original document conveyance direction decreases in a sloping manner toward the downstream direction,

the spacer [[is]] comprising a topmost edge configured to cause a first portion of the original document to be out of contact with the reading transparent member at a location over the original document reading position and a second portion of the original document to come in contact with the reading transparent member at a location downstream from the original document reading position relative to the original document conveyance direction as the first portion of the original document is conveyed over the original document reading position, and the spacer comprising a

sloping surface configured such that a trailing edge portion of the original document passes a position very close to or in contact with [[a]] the sloping surface of the spacer, and

a distance between the reading transparent member and the first portion of the original document is less than 0.3 mm at the location over the original document reading position.